

## Lynn Bielawiec

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**From:** Sue Errickson <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 22, 2017 10:12 AM  
**To:** Lynn Bielawiec; Lisa Pascuzzi; Beebe, Marilee  
**Subject:** Fwd: Charter Revision  
**Attachments:** Charter Revision commission.pdf

This email was referenced at the meeting last night of the Charter revision Commission-it is being sent to you for the archives. (Lisa-can you attach to the minutes, please?)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Charles Mayer <[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** Thu, Aug 24, 2017 at 2:58 PM  
**Subject:** Charter Revision  
**To:** Errickson Sue <[REDACTED]>

Sue,

JoAnn tells me that you had a couple of questions about why the Council & BOE have different numbers of people. Having been on that "original" Charter Revision Commission back in the early '70s I can't recall how we arrived at the numbers. That's a long time ago, 45 years, and I've slept a few times since then. However, prior to 1973 we had a 3 member Board of Selectmen, a 5 member Board of Finance, & a six member bi-partisan BOE, 3 Republicans & 3 Democrats. That was how the BOE was made up when I first was elected to it. Jim Cornish was chairman and the other 2 democrats were Carolyn Kolwicz & Bob Dean. The other 2 republicans with me were Carol Duncan & Barbara Kalas, whose husband, Frank, was one of the republican selectmen around that time, but maybe not at exactly the same time. The bi-partisan BOE worked pretty well because I recall very few votes that we deadlocked 3-3. However, even that BOE believed that we should have more members and that to preclude any possibility of deadlocks there should be an odd number of members there too since that's where we were going with the Town Manager/Council form of government. We all believed that was the way to go but nobody envisioned that a Town Manager would become a squatter as John Harkins did. We expected that most TM's would use Tolland as a stepping stone to TM positions in places like Glastonbury, Avon, and even Hartford, New Haven, etc. Harkins was Assistant TM in Manchester when he came herein '73. I think that's where Werbner came from too, isn't it?

Because each local election became a contest in which the candidates essentially argued that the selectmen should be elected because they were "in town" during the day and not working in Hartford, (Stu Joslin), or East Hartford at P&W, (Dick Knight), the CR Commission felt that we needed a professional town administrator along with a Town Council such as the BOE had a professional Superintendent. I still believe that that was the correct way to go in spite of the fact that we got stuck with Harkins for the first 20+ years of the TM/Council form of government. He was a pompous SOB. I once wrote a letter to the editor in which I stated that he & Joslin together made a very strong case for term limits on both the Council & in the TM position. I was pleased that Joel Fain & the other democrats on the Council eventually did fire him but I disagreed with the way that they handled it.

Now to the current CR Commission. I firmly believe that the referendum to adopt the budget must stay just as it is. The attached JI article with the highlighted comments by former republican opportunist, Rick Field and,

more importantly, current republican Joe Sce is precisely why. If you change it so that the council ultimately gets to adopt the budget, there is no doubt in my mind that they will screw around by playing games until the referendum process is exhausted and then adopt the budget that they wanted in the first place. So if you put a limit on the number of referenda, you might as well just eliminate it altogether. I specifically saved the attached article because, as you know, I like to write letters to the editor and this is to be the basis for my opposition to any change that eliminates or limits the number of referenda that we get to vote on. In my opinion the taxpayers should have the final say on what is adopted for the budget, not the council or anybody else. If you look at the records of the past years that we have had a referendum, there have been only 2 or maybe 3 times that it went for more than 2 referenda. The council needs to face/endure as many referenda as it takes for them to get it right! And that applies to both parties!

As for the other items to be considered, I think staggered terms make sense to provide continuity in the unlikely event that an entire Board turns over in a given year. For example the BOE could elect 3 members to 4 year terms every 2 years so that 6 members would always be holdovers. That becomes more problematic with the 7 member TC so you could increase it to 9 as well. I believe the Vernon TC has 12 members and a Mayor who becomes the tie breaker in a tie vote. And the 12 member council could be 6-6 but in Vernon the GOP has controlled by as much as 9-3 for a couple of years. Without a Mayor tie breaker, I would want to keep the TC at an odd number. The other problem with increasing the number of members on the TC is that you know all too well that we often have trouble finding good candidates for all Boards and commissions as it is. Maybe the BOE should be reduced to 7 as well. I'm not sure how you would set up staggered terms on a 7 member board

Changing the budget calendar isn't going to solve the problem that we are facing this year anyway. This is the only year in my 50+ years in Tolland that has resulted in a problem. Remember, the legislature is only in session from January to June and the state fiscal year is currently the same as Tolland's, July 1st – June 30th. I guess I don't see how changing the calendar would improve anything. The best improvement would be for the state to get off this bi-annual budgeting process & do its budget every year. But that's not likely to happen because I believe that that would require a state constitutional amendment, not likely.

Increased power to call referenda? I'm not sure what that means. Increased power for whom? The TC, the TM, or the voters? We already require a referendum to dispose of town property, to acquire town property, to appropriate large sums of money outside the budget process, so what is the purpose of this idea?

As far as I'm concerned the current charter has worked pretty well for the most part, and my main concern here is that I believe that this entire move is an attempt to get rid of the budget referendum so the voters can't force the TC & TM to keep from going wild as the state has done for so long. I am a strong proponent of the adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," but it doesn't hurt to review it every 10 or 15 years or so, just as we maybe should have a Federal Constitutional convention every 25 or 30 years.

Enough of my ranting for now. Hope this helps you to guide this commission well. I think Marilee has a pretty good head on her shoulders too.

Chuck

# Tolland council launches charter revision work

By Zachary F. Vasile

Journal Inquirer

TOLLAND — Local officials moved to initiate the town's charter revision process this week, the first time in over a decade that town leaders have agreed to a comprehensive review of the community's guiding legal document.

The Town Council gave the go-ahead Tuesday with a vote in favor of seating a nine-member Charter Review Commission. Appointees include Planning and Zoning Commission Chairwoman Susan Erickson, current council Republican Robert Green, former Democratic state representative Bryan Hurlburt, former planning and zoning chairwoman and current zoning appeals board member Marilee Beebe, former Friends of Tolland Schools leader Abigail Jeffries, Benjamin Christensen, Phillip Aieta, Liz Costa, and Hollie Barnas. Erickson and Beebe will serve as the commission's co-chairwomen.

Green abstained from the council's vote because of his then-pending nomination to the panel.

Before opening up discussion about potential changes Tuesday night, Councilman William Eccles noted that the charter review process is lengthy and cautiously designed, with neither the council nor the Charter Revision Commission wielding disproportionate power.

The council, for instance, can recommend changes for the commission to consider, but nothing binds the commission members to address those concerns specifically. Appointees are free to debate whatever alterations they want and may present whatever recommendations they decide on to the council.

Council members, however, decide which, if any, of the commission's proposals actually proceed to a referendum.

In any event, the commission will not be starting from scratch, since town officials have been gathering recommendations and feedback from various sources in the community for months. Documents included as part of this week's meeting packet included numerous and detailed suggestions from Erickson, building official Jim Paquin, Director of Planning and Development Heidi Samokar,

Human Services Director Beverly Bellody, Town Manager Steven Werbner, Fire Chief John Littell, and Finance and Records Director Lisa Hancock.

Recommendations to the commission include:

- Staggered terms for the council and the Board of Education.
- A budget calendar that more closely aligns with the state's.
- Possible limits on the number of local budget referenda.
- Increased power to call a referendum to deal with specific issues.
- An assessment of charters in other towns to glean information about useful charter functions.

Though the council will have a forum to debate the recommendations once the commission returns with its suggestions, some members voiced their personal views on potential changes. Though most seem to favor staggered terms as a means to preserve institutional knowledge, the budget referendum, as always, produced a strong mix of opinions.

Reflecting on Tolland's ongoing efforts to shape a budget in a year with almost no state guidance, council Chairman Rick Field said he could entertain the idea of limiting the referenda, which in some years have dragged on for months.

"I definitely would be against stopping the referendum," Field told the council. "But I do think we have to have something in there that says, after the third referendum, the council will decide, because the way it is now, you could have 15 referendums before you come up with something."

Council Republican Joseph Sce countered that limits could open up the process to manipulation if a future council decides to reduce its proposals by marginal amounts between votes.

In an email Thursday, council Democrat David Skoczulek said he is confident that the new appointees, under Erickson's and Beebe's guidance, will proceed with a fair and balanced approach. And though Skoczulek said he hopes the commission will take a serious look at changes like staggered terms, the process is not meant as a sweeping re-evaluation.

The commission is expected to hold a public hearing in the coming weeks to gather input from residents.